ANG Bayan

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EDITORIAL

Confront the illegitimate US-Marcos II regime with great resistance

In less than ten days, the country will witness one of the most loathful and embarrassing historic event: the oath-taking of Ferdinand Marcos Jr as the 17th president of the Government of the Republic of the Philippines.

After more than 36 years since being ousted from Malacañang, the utterly detested Marcos family will be back at the apex of political power. For close to two decades, they satiated themselves and basked in power. The assumption of Marcos Jr as Philippine president is like rubbing salt on the people's unhealed wound.

The Marcos II regime is illegitimate. It is founded on the basis of the rigged elections. Marcos Jr colluded with Duterte to use the Comelec and the company running the automated counting to fake a "landslide victory." Experts are convinced that the 31.5 million votes was conjured by electronic magic. For the first time, the highest vote of a winning senator was topped by that of a presidential candidate, especially of a dawdler who in the past years was known only as losing vice presidential candidate. To cover-up the widespread and systematic fraud, some people claim that the Marcoses succeeded in dumbing the Filipinos.

But the Filipino people will not be fooled. They repudiate the Marcos II regime and are determined to resist all efforts to reverse their historical judgement of the Marcoses and advance their demands for justice. The people are aware how Marcos Jr plans to use state power to render moot all the cases of corruption and plunder against Imelda and allow her to completely evade justice and continue to lavish on their $10 billion ill-gotten wealth.

People are aware how Marcos Jr will use state power to suppress and silence all who resist his rule. Even now, police have declared it will not allow "illegal rallyists" on June 30 and will stop anyone to denounce the illegitimate regime.

As the Marcoses have declared, they will use power to change how history is written, to falsely describe the period of martial law as "golden years" and obscure the fact of widespread corruption and plunder, mass detention, torture and killings of those who fought the dictatorship. Those who assert the truth about the dark days of Marcos' reign are

now being threatened. They are being tagged as "communists" and threatened to be made counterinsurgency targets.

The people are aware how Marcos Jr will use the six years to completely frustrate attempts to recover the Marcos wealth, and to further accumulate bureaucrat capitalist wealth through arm-twisting of and bribe-taking from big business, pocketing percentages of government contracts and enlarging and perpetuating their political dynasty.

The Filipino people are aware how the US-Marcos II regime will prolong the neoliberal policy dictates of foreign banks and monopoly capitalists led by the US. Amid government bankruptcy (with the 2022 budget already used up) and mountains of debt left by Duterte, there are threats of more onerous taxes being imposed on the people. With false promises of development, all favors are being extended to foreign monopoly capitalists, especially in large plantations and mining operations which plunder the country's natural wealth, grab land and prevent progress.

Under Marcos Jr, state subservience to the imperialist US and China, especially the US, is certain. The reactionary state will continue to kowtow to the counterinsurgency doctrine that favors waging a war that relies on firearms and bombs sold by American companies.

The putrefaction of the ruling system is clearly shown by the assumption of Marcos Jr at the head of the reactionary state that serves primarily to defend the interests of the ruling classes and the ruling semicolonial and semifeudal system.

The worsening crisis of the ruling system under Marcos Jr will generate conditions favorable for advancing the Filipino people's mass resistance and armed revolution. Workers, peasants and other oppressed sectors are being compelled to get organized and fight for grievances and defend their well-being amid rising prices and fees, low wages, unemployment, landlessness and land grabbing, grossly low prices of farm products, and dumping of foreign agricultural surpluses.

Under Marcos Jr, the division of Philippine society between the minority ruling classes and the majority of the oppressed and exploited people who are wallowing in poverty and hardships, will become more pronounced. The Filipino people must be tirelessly aroused, organized and mobilized in order to stengthen and expand their mass struggles.

As Marcos Jr bows to the US and China, especially the US, the absence of genuine sovereignty will be more pronounced and make people more aware of the need to fight for national freedom.

The worsening political repression and blocking the avenue for all other forms of expression will push more and more people to effectively fight recognition of their basic rights. They must militantly and courageously resist all forms of repression and fight for their rights —including the right to March against Marcos's inauguration—and oppose all attempts to take away their right to free expression.

Shutting the doors to legal forms of struggle is further pushing the Filipino people to the path of revolutionary armed struggle. Under the illegitimate US-Marcos II regime and trampling of the people's democratic rights, the justness and necessity of armed resistance becomes more and more indubitable. AB



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Contents

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Stolen elections

Experts are convinced that rigging occured in the recent elections in favor of Ferdinand Marcos Jr. This was done through programming the vote-counting machines for automatic vote-shaving and vote-padding.

These information technology (IT) experts include former Comelec commissioner and NAMFREL official Gus Lagman, previous secretary of the Department of Information and Technology Eliseo Rio and former bank official Franklin Ysaac. They pointed out that IT experts were not present when the SD cards were inserted into the VCMs. Contrary to election rules, these cards were not assigned digital signatures. Therefore, there is no assurance as to the integrity of the SD inserted into the machines, whether these contain the same program examined by experts. There was a long period in between the two where the cards could have been replaced or reprogrammed to reflect out the pattern where the votes for Marcos Jr at Leni Robredo were consistently at 68-32 percentages.

On election day, it would even be probable that the actual votes were not counted at all, they said. There was no way of checking that the votes coming from the VCMs were correct.

They also questioned the rapid transmission of the votes to Comelec servers and the dumping of results without identifying the precincts where the returns originated.

Even prior to election day, it was clear that safety measures to ensure transparency were lacking. An example is the random manual count of over 200 precincts which is not at all random as the list was generated from 757 precincts preselected by Comelec computers. They insist that the *tambiolo* (raffle box) system should be utilized to pick precincts for manual counting in the verification of VCM results. AB

Ka Louie et al are not terrorists

THE "ANTI-TERRORISM COUNCIL" (ATC) baselessly labeled as "terrorists" Ka Louie Jalandoni and 10 others in its Resolution No. 31 publicized last June 15.

Ka Louie is publicly known as peace negotiator of the National Democratic Front of the Philippines, and is a "highly regarded revolutionary and stalwart of the national democratic cause."

Apart from Ka Louie, the ATC named Simon Naogsan, spokesperson of the Cordillera People's Democratic Front. The list also included alleged CPP leaders Afrecia/Apricia Alvares/Alvares Rosete of Western Mindanao; Maria Luisa Purcray of Ilocos-Cordillera; Maria Gigi Ascano-Tenebroso of Kaguma and finance officer of the CPP in Southern Mindanao and Walter Alipio De Asis Cerbito of the Christians for National Liberation.

Meanwhile, five other "terrorists" are being linked by the ATC to the "local terrorist groups" Abu Sayyaf and Daulah Islamiyah. AB

Imperialist oil companies are raking in profits

While majority of the Filipinos are drowning in poverty caused by skyrocketing prices of petroleum products, big imperialist banks and finance agencies and big oil companies are floating in profits from oil. The past weeks, the prices of gasoline are almost ₱100 per liter, double its price at the beginning of the year.

Imperialists are vigorously pushing oil prices up through market speculation, so-called oil futures, or contracts for buying future stocks of oil. This is being promoted by big banks like JP Morgan and Goldman Sachs and other hedge funds and investment houses which pour funds to the market and make periodical price increase announcements to influence market prices.

Despite the war in Ukraine, there is no shortage in oil supply or in crude oil refining capacity. Oil companies are raising prices not to cover cost but to increase company profits.

The first quarter (2022) net income of Shell, ExxonMobil, BP, Chevron and ConocoPhillips (among the world's biggest oil companies) ballooned by 300% to $35 billion. China Petroleum and Chemical Corp., the biggest oil refiner in Asia and among the biggest source of petroleum imports by local oil distributors in the Philippines, saw its net income surge by 25%.

Philippine oil companies are also making huge profits. Petron Corporation's net income for the first quarter of 2022 soared to ₱3.6 billion, twice more than last year, while Pilipinas Shell made ₱3.5 billion, 3.5 times than last year.

Meanwhile, apart from justifying price increases with false reasoning, the Duterte government stubbornly refuses to remove excise taxes imposed on oil products as it expects it to generate around ₱150 billion this year. AB

Rollback oil prices!

JEEPNEY DRIVERS LED by Piston protested in front of Petron gasoline stations in Quezon City and Valenzuela City last June 7 and 14 to condemn yet another series of oil price increases. Oil prices have increased five times since the last week of May. This has pushed gasoline prices up to ₱100 per liter in some places.

Hacienda Tinang: A model of fake land reform

Close to 100 farmers and their supporters were illegally arrested last June 9 in Hacienda Tinang in Concepcion, Tarlac. Among them were 83 who were charged with illegal assembly and malicious mischief. For four days, they suffered hardships in the hands of police before being set free by posting bail amounting to more than ₱1 million last June 12. In the first court hearing last June 17, they were charged anew with four more cases.



Last June 9 in the morning, 94 beneficiaries of the fake land reform started a collective farming *(bungkalan)* in a parcel of land within the hacienda. They were assisted by support organizations. According to Malayang Kilusang Samahan ng Magsasaka ng Tinang (Makisama-Tinang), the beneficiaries' organization, the *bungkalan* aimed to give relief to their hunger most especially since prices of commodities continue to rise. It asserted that the ₱230 daily wage in the sugarcane fields is grossly insufficient.

No more than two hours into the *bungkalan*, the police came and ordered them to stop because of supposed complaints from the Tinang Samahang Nayon Multi-Purpose Cooperative, a cooperative run by the Villanueva family, the primary political dynasty in Concepcion. Those who gathered were able to prevent the first attempt after demanding the presence of the Provincial Agrarian Reform Office.

After the dialogue, the Concepcion police who were assisted by at least six other units of the military and police, proceeded with the violent dispersal and illegal arrest of almost all participants of the *bungkalan*.

Decades of deceit

Hacienda Tinang covers 1,200 hectares of sugarcane fields which were originally owned by the Aquino family. A parcel (200 hectares) supposedly covered by land reform was sold by the family to a private company. The said company sold the land back to the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR). In September 26, 1995, the agency released a list of 236 beneficiaries of land in the hacienda.

Makisama-Tinang added that the Villanueva family deliberately concealed the papers showing the farmers' collective ownership of the land. It was only in 2016 that the farmers came to know that they were beneficiaries of the hacienda. In the same year, they filed a petition at the DAR to settle boundaries of the beneficiaries' land. The agency released a final order in 2018 and 2019.

The Villanuevas were able to deny the farmers their land rights because the former controls the local village council. In 1995, Vernon Villanueva was chairman of Barangay Tinang. As such, he is a powerful member of the Barangay Agrarian Reform Council which determines the list of beneficiaries. His brother Jojo was administrator of the farmers' cooperative which is included in the 200-hectare land covered by the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program or CARP. Barangay Tinang's current chairman is his son Norman Villanueva while he sits as Concepcion councilor.

According to Makisama-Tinang, the Villanuevas have played a big part in preventing their land claims especially after their brother Noel Villanueva won as mayor in the recent elections. This mayor even accompanied the police to disperse the *bungkalan* and arrest its participants.

The farmers are puzzled why the DAR allowed the Villanueva-run cooperative to file a petition in April 2021 when a final order was already issued. Because of this, the list of beneficiaries was again subjected to validation. They fear that the Villanuevas will replace their names.

According to Antonio Flores of the Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (UMA), the non-awarding of land to the beneficiaries since 1995 clearly shows how the CARP failed in distributing land to the farmers. "Everyone knows that only the big landlords and arienderos are the ones benefiting from the sugarcane fields in Tarlac," he said. "Even under CARP, legitimate owners remain oppressed and exploited, and worse, the DAR does nothing to break up the control of the rich on vast lands."

A day after the *bungkalan*, the CARP's 34th anniversary was marked on June 10. In Tarlac, this coincided with Danding Cojuangco Day, honoring the landlord Eduardo Cojuangco. This celebration was enacted in Congress in 2020 by then congressman Noel Villanueva.

UMA condemned the Villanuevas for using the members of the family-initiated cooperative to prevent Makisama-Tinang to rightfully claim their land. The group also condemned the NTF-Elcac in its red-tagging of the bungkalan in order to criminalize the struggle of the farmers. AB

Marcos aims to overshadow historic protest

The campaign to wipe out the bitter memories of the 14-year military rule by the US-Marcos I dictatorship have been stepped up now that their family has reclaimed state power.

Ferdinand Marcos Jr chose the National Museum in Manila City as venue for his inauguration on June 30 as the 17th president. He said that this former hall of Congress is where earlier presidents took their oath to the fake republic.

The truth is that the Marcoses intend to bury the building's history as the venue of one of the largest rallies of Filipino students against Ferdinand Marcos Sr. It was here that the historic 1970 demonstration was held sparking the "First Quarter Storm" or FQS. In the first quarter of 1970, demonstrations erupted left and right in Manila and across the country arousing hundreds of thousands of Filipino youth to take action and shake the foundations of the ruling state.

On January 26, 1970, while Marcos Sr was delivering his fifth State of the Nation Address (the first under his second 4-year term), young people were massing up outside the building. They brought along a coffin to symbolize the death of democracy and an effigy of a crocodile representing corrupt politicians.

Among those who joined the protest were 10,000 students from exclusive colleges and universities. They linked arms with the larger contingent of Kabataang Makabayan, Samahang Demokratiko ng Kabataan and other activist groups. When the Marcos couple came out of the Congress hall, the coffin and crocodile effigies were tossed towards them. The police violently dispersed the protest action.

The dispersal went on for several hours which ignited a series of protests of the youth and students in Metro Manila and different cities and towns. Protests from January to March 1970 spread across the country like wildfire. (Scenes during those days are recounted in detail in Jose F. Lacaba's book "Days of Disquiet, Nights of Rage.")

Threats to freedom of peaceful assembly

To hide memories of the FQS, current police chief Gen. Vicente Danao strictly prohibited "illegal rallyists" to come near the National Museum on the day of the inauguration. This was reinforced with threats by Gen. Eduardo Año and former martial law implementor Juan Ponce Enrile who declared that the rallyists are "communists" who are set to "embarrass" Marcos Jr on the said occasion.

In a retort, the Communist Party of the Philippines said that the Marcos family has long been an "embarrassment" and has no credibility. The Filipino people and the whole world are aware that the Marcoses and their cronies plundered billions upon billions of dollars from the country's coffers. While they wallowed in extravagance, majority were mired in extreme poverty and hunger, and wholesale illegal arrests and detention, torture and killings of suspected subversives or whoever the state's armed goons set their eyes on are non-stop.

The National Union of People's Lawyers asserted that permits are not required to hold public gatherings, contrary to the PNP's declaration. The lawyers said that the law guarantees the freedom to hold rallies and permit requirements are only to advise the local government of the time and place of the event.

"The right to protest is covered by two separate guarantees in the Bill of Rights—the freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly," said the group. Therefore, whoever joins a peaceful rally should be free from arrest, and not charged in court, prosecuted or punished in any way.

Anti-mining barricade in Benguet. Officials and tribe leaders in Bulalacao, Mankayan, Benguet set up a barricade against ongoing operations of Crescent Mining Development Corporation last June 18. The groups pointed out that the agreement between the company and the local government expired last year.

Defending sovereignty. Progressive groups in Davao and Cebu launched rallies last June 12 to commemorate the 124th year of sham freedom. In Davao, protesters gathered in Freedom Park to call on the government to defend national sovereignty. In Cebu, rallyists assembled in Fuente Osmeña Circle. In Metro Manila, a picnic was organized by progressive groups at the Bantayog ng mga Bayani.

Strike in Tanduay. Workers of Tanduay in Talisay City, Negros Occidental under the leadership of Tanduay Bottle Sorters Organization declared a strike last June 16. They are calling for the reinstatement of union leaders and members who were prohibited to enter the factory. The workers filed for notice of strike last June 1, after 100% of workers voted in favor of the strike.

UP contractual security guards protest. More than 130 security guards under the employment agency FEMJEG Security Agency lost their jobs after the administration of the University of the Philippines-Diliman awarded the contract to Grand Meritus Agency. In their dialogue last June 6, the UP administration presented no clear plans to employ them under the new agency. Most of those terminated have been working in the university for decades.

Police arrests environmental defender

Environmental defender Vertudez "Daisy" Macapanpan, 68, was illegally arrested in Barangay Burgos, Pakil, Laguna last June 11. About 40 elements of police units surrounded her house. Macapanpan had just given a talk in an assembly against the destructive Ahunan Pumped-Storage Hydropower Project which will be built in Mt. Inumpog, Sierra Madre.

Four cases of arrest, a case of killing and attempted murder were also reported the past weeks.

Elements of the 7th IB shot and killed Calisa Langgaw, 57, a resident of Sitio Matingaw, Barangay Tacuhin, Palimbang, Sultan Kudarat last June 6. Langgaw, a barangay council member, was killed while hunting in Oh Luson hill, part of Sitio Matingaw. Soldiers claimed that she was a member of the New Pople's Army and was planted with an M16 rifle as evidence.

In Sorsogon, unidentified armed elements indiscriminately fired at two civilians in Barangay Gabao, Irosin last May 29 at 9 p.m. The 16 year old minor and his father were left wounded.

Last June 4, soldiers of the 31st IB ransacked and robbed Ricky Evaso's house, a farmer in Barangay Olandia, Barcelona. Soldiers stole his money worth ₱7,000 which were meant to buy piglets and rabbits.

Military operations of the 31st IB started last May 24 in Gubat, Barcelona and Bulusan towns. Soldiers are occupying barangay halls and chapels in the said towns. Last June 2, soldiers called for a meeting in Barangay Bugtong, Barcelona to force residents to "surrender."

In Ifugao, the 7th ID arrested Emmanuel Tan in Barangay Namal, Asipulo last May 30 and forced him to surrender. Tan is a cultural worker in the peasant and minority community in the area.

Last June 12, the 62nd IB illegally arrested peasant leader Macario Fat Sr in Guihulngan City.

In Masbate, from May 30 to June 1, two farmers were arrested on charges of murder and violation of the Anti-Terror Law, while three others charged in the case are being forced to surrender by the Cataingan local police. They are accused of being members and supporters of the NPA. AB

Unsafe workplaces threaten workers' lives

Stephen Corilla, a worker of Universal Robina Corporation (URC) in Tabok, Mandaue City, Cebu, was added to the long list of victims of violations of occupational safety and health standards in workplaces. Corilla died last June 2 when the company's pulverizer machine malfunctioned while he was in it.

According to workers and a report by the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE), the machine's safety device was defective causing it to suddenly run while Corilla was inside cleaning it. The victim was asked to clean the machine despite lack of experience and had just started work two weeks earlier.

In addition, the company did not immediately respond to the incident and continued operations after the crime. It did not immediately report the incident to the police, the barangay or DOLE. In addition, URC has yet to provide any substantial aid to the victim's family, asserting that Corilla is agency-hired and thus, not a worker of the company.

Prior the Corilla's death, four workers were killed after a building in the Muralla Industrial Park in Barangay Libtong, Meycauayan, Bulacan crumbled last May 31. The incident was caused by overloading of parcels and packages in the building.

A report by the International Labor Organization-Philippines said that 17 of 18 workers labor in substandard working conditions. However, it was only in 2018 when violators of occupational safety and health standards were penalized after a legislation was passed prompted by the death of 72 workers trapped inside a burning factory owned by Kentex. According to the Institute for Occupational Health and Safety Development, despite the law, only 58.36% of workplaces observe safety and health standards. The government and its agencies also fail to address the long-standing problems pertaining to inspection of workplaces to ensure the law's implementation.

The annual inspection of more than a million establishments in the country is undertaken by only 774 employees. They have only inspected less than 10% of the total in the past three years.

The most common violations of occupational safety and health standards violations since 2019 include the lack of first aiders, safety officers, and fire inspection clearances.

Amid a series of workplace accidents, labor organizations declared that "it is time to review and amend existing laws that should protect workers' rights." Because of the law's loopholes, capitalists are free to continue operations despite the numerous cases of violations of the provisions. AB

Razon's repugnant businesses

In the race of billionaires, ranking second is Enrique Razon Jr, one of Duterte's biggest bourgeois-comprador cronies. In the past six years, he was favored with government and military contracts, and drew profits from the sweat of workers and other toiling classes. During the Covid-19 pandemic, his wealth almost doubled. From ₱182.7 billion in 2020, his declared wealth this year shot up to ₱360 billion. This does not include deposits hidden in overseas banks.

Latest of Razon Jr's investments is a solar farm which he boasts will be the world's largest when completed in 2027. Solar farms are power plants which gather energy from the sun's heat. In 2020, he acquired 50% of Solar Philippines Tarlac Corp. owned by Leandro Leviste.

Razon has yet to publicly divulge where his solar farm will be built, but currently, Solar Philippines has acquired 10,000 hectares in Batangas, Nueva Ecija and Tarlac, mostly former corn and rice fields. Razon brags he will exceed the current largest solar farm in India covering 5,700 hectares.

Razon claims his solar farm is eco-friendly. What he does not say is that he also continues to engage in mining, dam constructions and carbon-fed energy plants in and outside the country. His project also involves grabbing thousands of hectares of agricultural lands, and loss of farmer's livelihood and homes.

The Razons are a known crony of Marcos Sr who served as the dictator's dummies in acquiring properties worth millions of dollars. Razon Jr, for his part, became known as every president's crony, most especially since the 2000s. He funded the creation of the National Unity Party and recently financed Marcos Jr's campaign.

Under Duterte, Razon Jr snatched one after another the Manila Water and power companies, Apex Mining, Dennis Uy's casinos, and others. An estafa case filed against him for not compensating a stockholder's shares was sidelined.

One of Razon Jr's main companies is the International Container Terminal Services Inc (ICTSI) which is notorious for oppressing dockworkers. ICTSI operates in 30 piers in 18 countries, most of which are poor and whose workers' rights are suppressed.

Whichever country ICTSI operates in, workers suffer Razon Jr's greed and cruelty—low wages, unsafe workplaces, and massive and illegal termination of unionists in order to be replaced with workers without benefits.

In Africa, ICTSI has monopoly of operations in the port of Madagascar where 62% of the population live below poverty line. Having full control of the delivery of imported food to the country, Razon shamelessly admits that he charges the country 500% more than other countries for his operations.

In the Philippines, communities in Rizal and Kalinga are endangered because of Razon's destructive dam projects. In 2009, if not for the struggle of Catanduanes residents and their supporters, Razon would have already grabbed around 7,000 hectares for his coal mine.

Knowing he has to rely on the military for his businesses to dominate, Razon also satisfies the mercenaries with funds. He built a ₱540-million building for the Philippine Military Academy. At the height of the military's bombardment of Marawi City, he supplied them with war equipment, in addition to providing soldiers with food and other necessities.

Meanwhile, he appointed former colonel Michael Ray Aquino as security officer of his casinos and mining company. It is the responsibility of the so-called "Lacson's butcher" to ensure "corporate social responsibility," which only means cleaning up his companies' evils and silencing oppressed communities. AB

Ecuadorians launch national strike

Indigenous and other Ecuadorians launched a Paro National (national strike) on June 13 against neoliberal policies which has caused them much hardship. Led by the Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas (Conaie), a federation of indigenous peoples in Ecuador, thousands blockaded streets to prevent the movement of vehicles and people. They paralyzed more than 20 major roads.

Among their demands is for the state to lower and maintain low oil prices (the country produces oil locally), subsidies for the poor and other reforms which go against the dictates of the International Monetary Fund.

On June 14, the state illegally arrested Leonardo Iza, Coanie president, and detained him for 24 hours. On June 19, Ecuador president Lasso Guillermo declared a "state of exception" in three provinces where protests are strongest. AB

Colombia elects anti-neoliberal president

FOR THE FIRST time ever, Colombians elected a left-wing and anti-neoliberal president. Gustavo Petro, together with his vice president Francia Marquez, won last June 19. He is likened to recently elected anti-imperialist presidents in Chile, Honduras and Peru.

Petrov served as mayor of Ecuador's national capital, Bogota. He is also known as a former member of M-19, an armed guerilla group which fought the government in the 1980s. For her part, Marquez is known as an environmental activist. AB

— IN — SHORT

₱3.5 BILLION

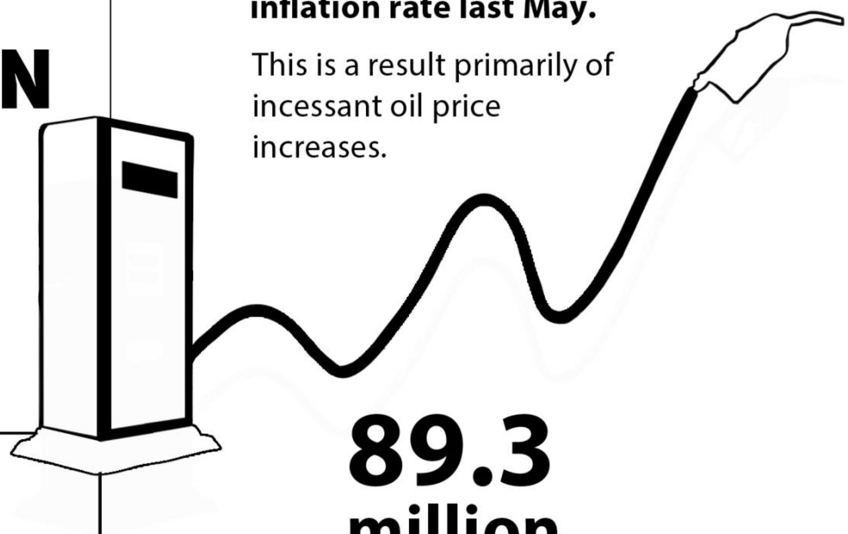
₱3.6 BILLION

net income of Petron and Shell Philippines in the first quarter of 2022, twice compared to the first quarter of 2021. They are scooping profits from artificially high international oil prices.

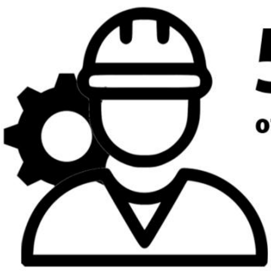
5.4%

inflation rate last May.

This is a result primarily of incessant oil price increases.



50%



of Filipino workers

said their working conditions are "stressful."

Source: Gallup International, July 2022

89.3 million

around the world were driven away from their homes due to repression, war, abuses and violence by the end of 2021

Source: United Nations Refugee Agency

35

cases of suppression against journalists from March to June 2022.



Source: National Union of Journalists of the Philippines

"The youth are the country's hope."

One of the famed adages written by Dr. Jose Rizal who was born on June 19, 161 years ago.





NUTRIBUN

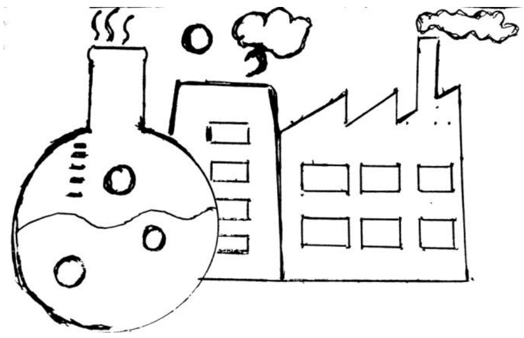
A type of bread claimed to symbolize the "golden years" of the Marcos dictatorship. In truth, this was developed and produced under a USAID-funded program. This was a cynical response to the widespread problem of malnutrition among Filipino kids.

3

aircraft carriers now compose the China naval fleet, **making it second, next to the US,** among countries with such war vessels.



Toxic chemical industry



Chemical and chemical product manufacturing are key elements in agricultural production and almost all manufacturing subsectors. It is considered a backbone of national industrialization. Production utilizes high technology and has a relatively high added value.

In the Philippines, it is the third largest manufacturing subsector —after food and electronics. In 2021, its value-added reached ₱390 billion, making up 11%-12% of the overall value-added of the manufacturing sector. Its gross value (average of ₱7 billion annually) comprises 6.7% of the gross domestic product.

Even so, the country's chemical industry is small and uneven. There are key products, such as fertilizers and medicines, which are insufficiently produced and do not meet local demand. The Philippines imports 95% of its fertilizer needs. Local production is also reliant on imported petrochemicals and other inputs and elements.

On the other hand, it is said that the country is capable of producing enough, and even beyond the demand for consumer products like plastic spoon and fork, wrappers, containers and styrofoam. The use of these single-use plastics is one of the world's greatest polluters, has destroyed ecosystems and killed marine animals.

In the past, the Philippines is a major exporter of glycerin—an oleochemical extracted from coconut—used in soaps and other hygiene products. Starting 2010, global demand has relatively slowed down after palm oil emerged as a stronger substitute. Cheaper and more abundant palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia slowly overtook Philippine exports.

In 2019, there were 1,400 companies registered in the chemical industry and 46,000 chemicals processed in the local inventory. Almost half (43%) of the companies manufactured plastics, which comprises 26% of the country's chemical production. It includes plastic houseware, pipes and plastics for industrial use. The rest include basic chemicals like alcohol, industrial gas and resin (22%); and rubber products such as tires and slippers (7%). The majority (45%) are categorized as "other chemical products" such as perfumes, medicines, paint, soap and shampoo, ink, cosmetics, fertilizers, pesticides, lubricants and adhesives.

The industry is dominated by multinational companies like Dow Chemicals Pacific Ltd (US), Du Pont Far East Incorporated (France) and Bayer (Germany) and big agrochemical companies such as Monsanto (bought by Bayer) and Syngenta (China). Locally, Petron and JG Summit, Chemrez Technologies, Mabuhay Vinyl Corporation, Pacific Boysen Paint and RiChemical Corporation are listed as having large operations. Their major factories are located in Metro Manila, Bataan, Batangas, Cebu, Leyte, Negros and Iligan.

Toxic workplace

The industry directly employs 93,000, down from 147,000 in 2013. As with others in the manufacturing sector, contractualization and wage repression is prevalent in this subsector. In addition, its factories are notorious for backward production and grave abuses in occupational and health standards which have caused workers' injuries and deaths.

One of the greatest worker's tragedies is the 2015 fire in Kentex Manufacturing Incorporated, a factory which produced rubber slippers. Seventy two workers died in the fire, many of whom were women, while hundreds were never found. Aside from the improper storage of flammable chemicals, workers were made to work in prison-like conditions, wherein they were unable to escape when the fire spread. Most of them were contractuals who did not have benefits. In 2020, a court acquitted the company's officials and the Bureau of Fire Protection of any criminal liability, even though the factory was awarded a permit to operate when it did not meet safety standards.

Another unsafe workplace is that of Pepmaco, a company which produces soaps and shampoos. Workers here complain that they are made to handle pungent and corrosive chemicals without protection. The company uses Zeolite to make soap, a chemical known to cause cancer. These conditions are on top of issues like contractualization, extremely low wages and union-busting. AB

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